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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

GENERAL BOOKS AND BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

The Influence of Monarchs: Steps in a New Science of History.

By FREDERICK A. WOODS, M.D. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1913. Pp. xiii, 422.)

WE have to do here with a new science to which the author has given the name of "historiometry" and with a new philosophy of history which he calls the "gametic interpretation of history". The meaning of these terms may be made clear in their connection with the central thesis of the book, which is stated as follows in the preface: "Only very rarely has a nation progressed in its political and economic aspects, save under the leadership of a strong sovereign. It is indeed strange that so plain and simple a truth has never been dwelt upon before. There are, moreover, cogent reasons for believing that the monarchs have, to a very large extent, caused the changing conditions."

This truth emerges, in the author's opinion, from his survey of the history of fourteen countries of Europe during a long period, in general from the tenth century to the French Revolution. He grades the 368 rulers of this period according to "intellectual qualities", as superior, inferior, and ordinary or doubtful, and to each he assigns the mathematical symbol of plus, minus, or plus-minus. These valuations are based upon what historians have said of them, upon the "usual or standard authorities". "Historians may and do disagree upon minor points", says Dr. Woods, "but not often upon essentials"—a very optimistic statement, *couleur de rose*.

Having graded the monarchs, the author then grades the political and economic condition of the country during each reign. The two sets of marks are then presented in parallel columns and the results show that "strong, mediocre, and weak monarchs in about 70 per cent. of the cases" are associated with strong, mediocre, and weak periods. In other words history reveals a "very high correlation between mentalities of rulers and the conditions of their realms".

Having shown the fact of this correlation the author seeks its explanation, and he finds it in this—that the monarchs have caused the conditions, "the only explanation consistent with all the observations" (chap. XVII.). The reason for this is that the monarchs of Europe are a select and vastly superior breed, "a biologically isolated class" and that this superiority is due to heredity, not to environment or opportunity. Heredity is "the master key of history". The influences of environment are "trivial, illusive and difficult to measure". "For this view of history which postulates the extreme importance of heredity and

selection—this breeder's view of history as one might call it" Dr. Woods proposes the phrase "gametic interpretation of history". "The true interpretation of history must hinge upon the gametes" (or germ-cells) "and the laws of history will be found to be but a part of the laws which govern all organic life" (p. 303).

Dr. Woods's book is one of marked originality and of confident tone. It will probably provoke the historian, as every other "philosophy" of history has done, to repeated dissent, to frequent interrogation. He will regard this interpretation of the development of Europe during several centuries as pronounced over-simplification. The monarchs may be the result of the pedigrees—we will leave that to the proper authorities to decide—but if they are and if they are vastly superior to other men does it follow that the "conditions are the result of the monarchs"?

Again, probably most historians will regard Dr. Woods's method of dividing up these centuries into little sections, according to the length of the reigns, as artificial, and any attempt to grade them as if they were distinct units, as if they did not fuse and blend into each other, is a dubious proceeding. "The conditions of one reign do not sensibly influence the conditions of the next" is one of the hazardous assertions of this book (p. 249).

In reading this volume one inevitably wonders what Dr. Woods will do with Napoleon, "the most entirely known as well as the ablest of historic men", as Lord Acton says. Well, he adopts him! "Even Napoleon belongs in part to royalty, since the great *parvenu* augmented the strength of royalty inasmuch as he became royal and allied his family with royalty" (p. 261). This is quite in the vein of Napoleon himself, who was wont to assert that his *coups d'état* and plebiscites were in the interest of the Republic.

Of course, in a period of monarchical government monarchs exerted an influence. But that they exerted the overwhelming influence here indicated, that they "caused the conditions", or that they were in any great number the able men our author is inclined to think them would probably not be readily accepted by historians, at least without far greater proof than is vouchsafed. One would the more readily incline offhand to agree with Gibbon, who passed many of them in review and who expressed the opinion that "the generality of princes, if they were stripped of their purple and cast naked into the world, would inevitably sink to the lowest rank of society without a hope of emerging from their obscurity". Gibbon may have been unduly pessimistic but at least he was an accomplished interpreter of history and a connoisseur in monarchs.

CHARLES DOWNER HAZEN.

The Municipalities of the Roman Empire. By JAMES S. REID, Litt.D., Professor of Ancient History, University of Cambridge. (Cambridge: University Press. 1913. Pp. xv, 548.)

THIS volume is the product of a course of lectures originally delivered in the University of London, and afterward at the Lowell Institute,